

THE PRESS

REPORTERS

Taking a Stand

The San Francisco *Examiner* placed an editorial above its front-page logo, framed it with a red, white and blue border, and said: THE PROTEST MOVEMENT HELPS HANOI. The Birmingham *News* used a full page of color for the Stars and Stripes itself, topped by a Nixon quote: "Our road is not easy, not simple . . . but right." In its editorial space, the New York *Post* ran an obituary notice for the Viet Nam dead above 10 1/2 inches of white space.

Moratorium Day provoked other pre-

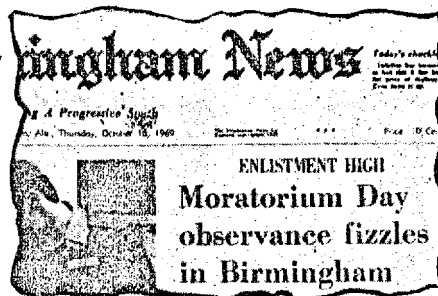
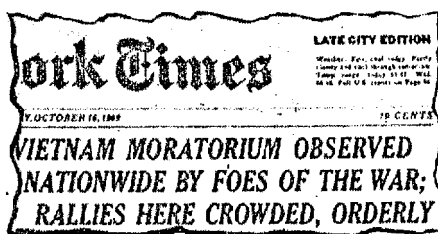
New York *Daily News* conceded the day after M-day that an "unknown number of sincere and entirely well-meaning persons" had taken part in what it earlier had termed a "treacherous nationwide jamboree."

Perhaps the most remarkable press reaction to M-day came not from the editorial writers and columnists, but from rank-and-file newsmen. In large numbers, they broke with tradition and became active participants in a controversial news event. Thousands across the nation signed petitions, attended rallies and wore Moratorium buttons. Many took off the buttons when they went on assign-

the paper's management, decided on his own to mark M-day with a front-page list of the Waterbury-area war casualties. He was dismissed the day it ran.

Generally, though, managements were permissive about newsmen being actively involved, provided the participation did not compromise journalistic images. The New York *Times* and the Wall Street *Journal* gave employees time off to support M-day. But the New York *Times* refused a newsroom group the use of its auditorium for an M-day rally, explaining that it did not permit any political meetings on its premises. (When the group rallied in front of the building instead, a sign appeared through an upstairs window: "Hanoi Loves You.") The *Journal* management balked at a request that the Dow-Jones ticker observe a minute's silence, insisting it would do nothing "to cast the slightest doubt on the complete impartiality of our presentation of the news."

Few employers or newsmen seemed concerned about preserving at least an appearance of impartiality among reporters. One exception was a group of non-management newsmen at CBS in New York. "Most everybody here is against the war," said one, "but most of us are also against expressing ourselves publicly. If you advertise your biases, nobody is going to believe you." The view dealt with appearances rather than the basic problem of bias in reporting the news. The press is probably best served when an overly partisan newsmen refuses an assignment.



dictable comment. Columnist Morrie Ryskind of the Los Angeles *Herald-Examiner* called Oct. 15 "Black Wednesday." At the other extreme, Nicholas von Hoffman referred to Nixon in the Washington *Post* as "what's-his-face, the furtive and fugitive President who darts from TV station to armed compound." In between, there was considerable editorial reaction that was not quite so obvious. Some newspapers favoring Nixon's Viet Nam policy, like the Los Angeles *Times*, showed the protesters a measure of sympathy, if not support. The Detroit *News* concluded that M-day had probably encouraged the enemy but added that it had also "served as a national safety valve for the venting of frustrations, legitimate and otherwise." Liberal Columnist Max Lerner was disappointed that the protesters were long on enthusiasm but short on policy. Many were impressed with the peaceful nature of the protest. Even the right-wing

ments, but not all. Some television newsmen continued to wear black arm bands as they covered the giant public rally on Boston Common. Wall Street *Journal* staffers, some bearing placards identifying them as "Wall Street Journalists," joined in a march in New York's financial district. More than 100 staff members of the San Francisco *Chronicle* sent Nixon a petition urging an immediate halt to the war; several of them also picketed the *Examiner* office next door to protest its pro-Nixon editorial.

Problem of Bias. Not all the nation's newsmen favored the protesters. In Houston, a reporter for radio station KILT refused to cover a demonstration in Hermann Park, declaring: "You can fire me if you want to, but I'm not going out there to talk to those jackasses." He wasn't fired, but dovish Floyd Knox, city editor of the *Waterbury (Conn.) Republican* was. Knox, who admits to having had other disputes with